

OPEN UNIVERSITY BRANCH
OF THE UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION
MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD 17 MARCH 2008

Present: Roger Walters (Chair), Meridian (Minutes), John Bennett, Alan Carr, Alan Carter, Pauline Collins, Judy Ekins, Malcolm Jenner, Lesley Kane, David Knowles, Mike McNulty, Bethan Norfor

Apologies: Chris Bollom, Cheryl-Anne, Rob Clifton, Maria Francis-Pitfield, Cicely Havely, Peter Lee, Anne McKee, John Peters, Peter Piper, Jon Pike, Roger Rees, Eric Wade

The President welcomed Judy Ekins, recently elected Regional Academic Staff Officer.

1 MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

Agreed: Minutes of the last Executive meeting (*OUBUCU/ECM/22.01.08/M*)

Tabled: Minutes of the Executive Awayday (*OUBUCU/Awayday Feb 08/M*).
 These will need to be agreed at the meeting in April.

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Confidentiality: items referring to individuals or negotiating strategy will be removed before publication.

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2 MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Elections for vacant Exec. posts *item 4.1*

- a. Judy Ekins was elected unopposed as Regional Academic Staff Officer.
- b. Two candidates have stood for the post of Equality Officer: John Bennett and Maria McCrea, so an election will be required.¹
- c. No candidates stood for the post of Central Academic Staff Officer – co-option possibilities will be investigated.

2.2 ALCR discussion of union matters *item 4.2*

The ban has been lifted by the University.

2.3 ALWG increased membership *item 4.3*

Not progressed. RJW will discuss with the 3 ALWG members and report to a later meeting.

RJW

2.4 DALS and performance management *item 4.6*

Management has given assurance that there will be no change to the essential purpose of DALS which is to provide student feedback to ALs and so enable them to develop best practice.

3 CO-OPTIONS

- a. June Payne, a member of the previous Exec., has agreed to co-option.
- b. Karen Angelasanto, and AL, has agreed to be co-opted.
- c. Central Academic Staff Officer – one member had expressed an interest and Roger is in email contact.
- d. Two additional people can be co-opted.

This will be discussed again at the next meeting.

¹ Post meeting note: John Bennett was elected to this post.

4 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

4.1 Single Table Bargaining

This ballot was open only to HE members of UCU, and achieved a 25% response. The membership voted against adopting single-table bargaining.

4.2 NEC election results

- a. Roger Walters was elected as Disabled members representative.
- b. Pauline Collins and Jon Pike were elected as ordinary members, but Lesley Kane was unsuccessful.
- c. Rob Clifton's term of office is coming to an end.

The Executive thanked Lesley and Rob for their contribution to the NEC.

5 HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

5.1 Rules on website

The adopted rules are available on the website, although they are still called 'proposed rules'. A finalised pdf version will be uploaded ASAP.

5.2 Newsletter Schedule

It was agreed that Meridian should draw up a schedule for newsletter publications for the year.

6 TREASURERS REPORT

The national finance officer has noted that the potential salary payment for the office manager was in the region on £58,000.

7 GROUP REPORTS

7.1 ALs Staff Officer (LK)

See Appendix 1 for the report.

- a. Redundancy Criteria – Roger Walters, Lesley and Malcolm should be responsible for a final Union version.
- b. We need to bring forward criteria for mid-term proposals.
- c. We should tell management that we do not agree the interim criteria as it is unfair to ALs. However, Meridian should continue to meet with HR for the monthly update of AL redundancies.
- d. We should look at the statistics for clarification via ALWG.
- e. ALWG should proceed as quickly as possible to agree new procedures based on those for full-time staff.

7.2 Regional Academic Staff Officer (JE)

- a. R11 held a meeting for members, which was very well received. Membership lists should be provided to regional centre reps to encourage similar meetings.
- b. We need regional centre reps in the regions. We currently have three: R01, R04 and R11.

7.3 Academic Related Staff Officer (CB)

- a. As a result of the national Ac-Rel meeting, a Manifesto has been drawn up - available via http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/i/2/ucu_armanifesto.pdf.
- b. Some Motions to Congress will be put forward.

8 Ethics, environment and corporate responsibility (RR)

- a. There is general agreement with Roger R's report. He will circulate his report in hard copy to the Exec., asking for comments. Appendices will be put onto the FC forum.
- b. The working group is authorised to proceed on this issue and report back to the

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RR

JNC TEAM

Exec.

- c. We should agree a procedure with the University for taking this issue forward together.

9 CONGRESS

9.1

Delegates

John Bennett
Alan Carter
Cheryl-Anne
Judy Ekins
Mike McNulty

Observers

June Payne
Roger Rees*
Eric Wade

**agreed post-meeting*

NEC members

Alan Carr
Rob Clifton
Pauline Collins
Lesley Kane
Jon Pike
Roger Walters

9.2 Motions

The Exec. agreed Roger Walters' proposed Motions (see Appendix 2). These will be taken forward to the General Meeting.

10 GRIEVANCES

Discussion took place over whether the President should automatically receive copies of grievance reports from the University. The existing policies and procedures state that it is up to the member who receives copies of the reports. Alan Carr pointed out that the outcomes of grievances are binding on the Union. Roger Walters finds it useful in giving him an overview of cases and decisions, and suggested that it should be automatic, unless individuals choose to opt out of this – the caseworker should make this clear as part of the process.

John Bennett, Alan Carr, Eric Wade and Roger Walters will discuss this and report back at a later date.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 John Bennett asked that his not having personal casework referred to him be reviewed.

11.2 It was noted that Thompson's solicitors has been tardy – again – in completing a compromise agreement.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 23 April, 10.30, in Gardiner 1, room 006.

JB /
A.CARR /
EW / RJW

ALs STAFF OFFICER REPORT TO EXEC. 17/03/08

(1) Our AL questionnaire - We have just done a live test of the online version, and it is collecting data as we expect. A few minor adjustments/corrections need making, but these are straightforward. It is important that we have the input from this for our negotiations on the ALRR, and I propose that the executive committee leaves myself, Roger and Malcolm (if Malcolm has the time) to finalise the arrangements and send out the necessary communication to ALs.

I also suggest that the communication to ALs should include a further appeal for ALs who are willing to become active at a regional level, and a further plug for the forum.

(2) ALRR and role profiles. I remain concerned about the apparent lack of time that will be allocated to the negotiations following management's AL Role Review.

From the vibes at the last AL Issues Sub-group it sounds as if they are producing OU-specific profiles rather than ones based on the national Teaching and Scholarship profiles, and that the profiles will be based on what they think will happen over the next few years rather than on the present role. I am a bit concerned about this becoming a means for avoiding the reality-check element that normally comes into HERA job analysis when analysts interview those who actually do a job.

(3) AL membership data and communications. I think the branch needs to look seriously at the problem of how we should hold and maintain accurate membership data both for ALs and other members. Based on the R13 list I think I was able to send an email to about 2/3 of our R13 members, and I suspect there are similar problems with our national AL members list which I suspect does not include (or include an up-to-date email address) for something like 1/3 of our AL members.

We are also having problems distinguishing between regional members and AL members, and we have to make an effort to sort out our membership data in case we have to ballot AL members on issue that come out of the AL Role Review.

(4) SSR and potential redundancies. Our position, of course, is against compulsory redundancies and that any change should be managed by voluntary redundancies and natural wastage. Management's definition of "natural wastage" is likely to differ from ours in the case of a workforce like ALs which is still on fixed term contracts. Underpinning this are issues like priority for the new jobs, and exploring the same options that are explored when other staff are under threat of redundancy.

The number of potential redundancies will be well over the limit that requires managements to consult with trade unions, and recent employment tribunal cases seem to have established that the consultation should go beyond simply the redundancies, but also the underlying reason for the redundancies, and should take place "in good time". See page three of the attached document for this.

One of the points we should consider making if a decision is taken that will lead to a reduction of the number of ALs or AL replacements in an academic area is that they should cease taking on outsiders unless absolutely necessary and give existing ALs the chance to consolidate their workload (within the limits of the Working Hours Directive).

(5) AL redundancy selection criteria. In the big picture this may turn out to be least of our problems.

However, we have been in a mess with this since the executive agreed that we should revert to the status quo ante with minimum changes required to comply with the law, at least as the basis for negotiation, and log failure to agree if necessary, and our negotiators at the following JNC did not take this forward.

If we want to unblock this there are several options available. One is to resume with the position described above, and log failure to agree at the JNC so that we can invoke the arbitration procedure in due course.

Another is to seek an meeting with management for an exchange of ideas (without commitment) to see if there is a basis for further discussion. Amongst other things we might find out how unmovable they are on the experience/ length of service issue, and whether they would consider incorporating something to protect ALs from repeated losses of courses within a limited period of time.

I am personally twitchy about agreeing to redundancy selection criteria (though loss of duties may be a different matter) since there is a very strong ethos from national UCU that we should not do this.

No impact assessment has been done, as is now required, w.r.t. the present criteria's effect on certain groups including the disabled.

Lesley Kane

16/03/08

PROPOSED MOTION TO CONGRESS

agreed at the General Meeting of OUBUCU 17 March 2008

Proposed by: Roger Walters

Seconded: Jon Pike

Opposition to changes to HEFCE funding for ELQ students

Congress believes that the government's decision to withdraw funding for higher education students who already have an equal or lower qualification - ELQ students - is retrograde. It is contrary to the government's commitment to life long-learning; it is especially damaging to those institutions which have done most to promote part-time and adult education and widening participation, and it discriminates against older students, women needing fresh qualifications to return to work, and those with increasing disabilities and health problems who need to change career.

Congress welcomes the wide opposition to this policy and pledges to continue to maintain and build the broad campaign – which involves among others Birkbeck, the OU, and the NUS – to highlight the fundamental flaws in the ELQ policy and seek its removal.

PROPOSED MOTION TO CONGRESS

agreed at the General Meeting of OUBUCU 17 March 2008

Proposed by: Roger Walters

Seconded: Alan Carr

Amendment of rules on submission of motions to Congress/Sector Conference

16.6.1 Second sentence, after 'branch/local association', add 'or, where there is more than one branch/local association within the same institution, each group of branches/local associations within the same institution,'.

16.6.2 Second sentence, after 'branch/local association', add 'or, where there is more than one branch/local association within the same institution, each group of branches/local associations with the same institution,'.

Purpose: to correct the inconsistency in the rules and bring the provision for the submission of motions into line with the provision for the entitlement to send delegates.

The amended rules would read:

16.6.1 Motions for National Congress, and amendments thereto, may be proposed by the National Executive Committee, branches/local associations, specialist committees set up under Rule 24 and National Equality Standing Committees. Each branch/local association **or, where there is more than one branch/local association within the same institution, each group of branches/local associations within the same institution**, shall be entitled to submit one motion and one amendment to National Congress.

16.6.2 Motions and amendments thereto for the Sector Conferences, may be proposed by the National Executive Committee's Further Education and Higher Education Sector Committees for the appropriate Sector Conference, and by branches/local associations in that Sector. Each branch/local association, **or, where there is more than one branch/local association within the same institution, each group of branches/local associations within the same institution**, shall be entitled to submit two motions and two amendments to the relevant Sector Conference.